

**Prepared Remarks of Chairman Julius Genachowski
Federal Communications Commission**

March 2010 Open Agenda Meeting

“A National Broadband Plan for Our Future”

**Washington, D.C.
March 16, 2010**

Thank you, Madame Secretary.

We are very fortunate to be joined by Blair Levin and members of his incredible team, who will talk about the National Broadband Plan. By way of introduction, a few words about the road to get here.

The extraordinary process leading to this national broadband strategy has been unprecedented:

- Unprecedented in its openness and transparency;
- Unprecedented in its breadth and depth of participation;
- Unprecedented in its professionalism; and
- Unprecedented in its analytical rigor.

The process involved the FCC’s first comprehensive series of staff-level public workshops – with 36 meetings attracting over 2,500 participants.

The 31 Public Notices issued were the most ever for a single proceeding, generating over 23,000 comments totaling more than 74,000 pages.

There were also multiple Commission-level field hearings outside of Washington, engaging with businesses, entrepreneurs, academics and citizens in an ongoing, interactive and productive process.

More firsts involved the broadband team’s use of new media tools.

This included the FCC’s first blog, which attracted more than half-a-million page views and generated 1,200 comments, all of which were entered into the official record.

Americans shared over 680 concrete ideas and comments on IdeaScale, and interacted with the team via Twitter and Facebook, all firsts.

Thanks to the engagement driven by the broadband and new media teams, the FCC has over 330,000 followers on Twitter, more than, it’s true, William Shatner. Yes, the FCC is boldly going where no Commission has gone before.

Many of the ideas voted on by the IdeaScale community made the final plan, as did of course ideas and facts and data supplied in connection with workshop and interactive public comment process -- as well as ideas from my Commission colleagues and their staffs.

I'm also pleased by the excellent and productive level of cooperation between the FCC, other federal agencies, and Congress.

I couldn't be prouder of the broadband team that drove this process and pulled the plan together, as part of an agency-wide process that enlisted the talent and expertise of every single bureau and office at the FCC.

The broadband team includes dedicated and brilliant professionals from a broad array of disciplines. Engineers, economists, entrepreneurs, scholars, analysts, lawyers, as well as leaders from non-profits, medicine, education and government. All coming together as public servants to tackle vitally important issues focused on what's right for our country.

I'll return to later to well-deserved thank-yous for Blair and the team.

For now, I want to thank my colleagues on the Commission and their staffs, who have been engaged for many months in this process, in hearings, workshops, meetings and briefings, providing valuable input on priorities and specific topics throughout the process, giving important speeches – including on digital inclusion, disabilities and spectrum – and providing helpful suggestions on drafts of the Plan.

I look forward to continuing this partnership as we begin specific proceedings to address the issues raised by the Plan.

And a special thank you to Commissioner Copps for his work as acting-Chairman to get this project off the ground. Commissioner Copps recognized the urgency of this task. Without his early strong leadership, we certainly wouldn't be where we are today.

With that, I turn it over to Blair Levin.

[PRESENTATION BY OMNIBUS BROADBAND INITIATIVE TEAM]

Today, with this plan, we deliver on one of the most important directives Congress and the President have ever given the FCC: A directive to prepare “a national broadband plan [that] shall seek to ensure that all people of the United States have access to broadband capability.”

Why was this assignment so important? Three reasons:

- First, because broadband is essential to our global competitiveness – essential to job creation in a digital economy, to ongoing investment in vital 21st century infrastructure, and to our ability to lead the world in innovation.
- Second, because broadband is essential for opportunity in America – for all Americans, from all communities and backgrounds, living in rural towns, inner cities, or in between.
- And, third, because broadband is essential to solving so many of the challenges facing our nation -- including education, health care, energy and public safety, each of which is specifically mentioned in the Congressional directive.

This is the great infrastructure challenge of our generation. And the work of the broadband team, in consultation with the broadest possible range of participants, confirms that Congress was right: we need a National Broadband Plan.

We need a strategic plan for broadband in America because, notwithstanding the many exciting things happening in the U.S. around wired and wireless broadband, our country is not where it should be in this fast-paced and rapidly changing world.

The U.S. is lagging globally; certain communities *within* the U.S. are lagging; and the costs of digital exclusion grow higher every day. Millions and millions are being left behind. The status quo is not good enough for America.

And Congress rightly directed that we prepare a broadband plan that lays out a strong course of action because if we don't act we are at risk.

If we don't act, our global competitiveness is at risk, as well as our role as the world's leader in innovation.

If we don't act, we put at risk what should be -- what must be -- a central engine of job creation in a 21st century economy.

If we don't act, we put at risk the promise of America as a land of opportunity, stranding on the wrong side of the digital divide a host of important American communities: rural Americans, low-income Americans, minorities, seniors, Tribal communities, and Americans with disabilities, too many of whom will be left fighting the challenges of a 21st century world with 20th century weapons.

If we don't act, we put at risk too many of our children, who won't have the tools they need to be successful members of the new economy and engaged citizens in our democracy.

If we don't act, we put at risk and will surely delay the benefits and cost savings from e-government and smart grid; e-textbooks and distance learning; electronic health records and remote diagnostics.

If we don't act, we put at risk our opportunity to lead the world in mobile; the vitality of our small businesses and entrepreneurs, whether in farming communities, small towns, or technology incubators; and we put at risk the ability of our first responders to obtain the tools they need to keep us—and themselves—safe.

The stakes are high, and place upon us an enormous responsibility.

The National Broadband Plan is the plan for action and the call to action that these times demand.

We must act, and we will act, with an urgency that meets the moment.

We have already begun, with orders speeding up tower siting and increasing eRate flexibility, and new tools to help consumers measure speed and the quality of their broadband service. These are just down payments. There is much more to do.

We will act to achieve the ambitious goals in the plan – goals including 1 gigabit to every community; affordable 100 megabits to 100 million households; and raising adoption from 65% to 90% adoption, heading to 100%.

And the same principles that guided the creation of this plan will guide its implementation, including:

- Processes that are open, participatory, fact-based, and analytically rigorous.
- A recognition of the transformative power of high-speed Internet, particularly around the spread of knowledge and information and the potential for innovation that we can imagine and that we can't.
- The essential role of private investment in extending broadband networks across our Nation. As many billions of dollars have already been invested, we need many billions more from many companies throughout the broadband ecosystem.
- The profound importance of competition to bring consumers the best services at the best prices, and to spur world-leading innovation and ongoing investment.
- The necessity of tackling vital inclusion challenges and promoting universal digital literacy, so that everyone, everywhere can enjoy the benefits of a broadband internet that is open, safe, and trusted.
- A recognition that government has a crucial, but restrained, role to play, focusing with laser-like precision on efficient and effective solutions – especially when it comes to unlocking the potential of spectrum, licensed and unlicensed, and promoting efficiency in spectrum use and devices; reforming the Universal Service Fund from yesterday's communications to tomorrow's in a prudent, determined way by cutting, capping, and transforming; providing cutting-edge communications tools to first responders; cutting red tape around use of public rights of way and working to reduce the costs of investment; and fully empowering consumers and citizens.

Especially in these challenging economic times, a focus on job creation, investment, and fiscal responsibility is mandatory, and I'm pleased that the Plan proposes actions that are revenue neutral, even before looking at the benefits from job creation and new investment.

The plan is idealistic, but not ideological. From my time in the private sector, I have personal appreciation for its focus on the vital role of private investment and competition; and on providing real solutions to real problems.

I appreciate its nature as a living, breathing strategic blueprint that will be reviewed and revised in light of experience and growing knowledge.

I appreciate it as a page-turner.

I appreciate it for the tough decisions made on what to put in the plan, and not, and to focus discussion on serious and thoughtful initiatives to solve real problems, not stale debates or shadowboxing.

I appreciate the plan's identification not only of the risks we face if we don't act, but what is possible if we do: unleashing on behalf of all America's people the power of a technology with the greatest potential to advance our economic and social well-being since the advent of electricity.

In bringing us to this important moment at this important time in history, I deeply appreciate the work of the broadband team, this incredible group stretching throughout the agency that has received unprecedented commendation for its extraordinary work.

The breadth and depth of the support and praise for the broadband effort is amazing.

In a space where consensus can certainly be elusive, more than 3,000 companies and non-profit organizations have applauded the broadband team and FCC staff's work and vision – including companies throughout the broadband ecosystem, large enterprises and small businesses, wired and wireless, hardware and software, network and edge; and also including leading organizations representing consumers and unions, as well as major philanthropic foundations, many of whom have called for a broadband plan for a long time. Today's action stands on the shoulders of their work.

The widespread praise of the broadband team and staff could not have happened if they hadn't earned it. It could not have happened without the full participation and energetic commitment of every Bureau and Office at the agency. And it could not have happened without the skill and tireless excellence of the staff in the Chairman's office, and I want to specifically acknowledge and thank Eddie Lazarus, Colin Crowell and Bruce Gottlieb, as well Maria Gaglio and Danny Ornstein.

The historic Plan released today of course owes more than can be described to the effective management and intellectual leadership of the Broadband Team – including the group sitting at the table today, Erik Garr, Carlos Kirjner, Phoebe Yang; the team leaders who have presented at prior Commission meetings; and the full staff around the agency that has worked so hard and so well.

This group has been an all-star team, as strong as any I've seen inside or outside government. The work has been non-stop for many months. In the last 75 grueling days, the team's star field-captain – Erik Garr -- and the group from the writer's room have set new records for commitment and excellence that will be very hard to match.

They owe much – we all owe much – to their families who have tolerated and encouraged – sometimes one, sometimes the other – the incredible work of this team. The team members are heroes, and their families are heroes.

And finally, of course, none of this could have been possible without the group's extraordinary leader-in-chief Blair Levin.

When I asked Blair to take on this challenge, I was certain of two things: first, that he was by far the best person in the country for the job; and second, that he would never do it.

The challenge of leading development of the broadband plan has required a set of skills that are basically impossible to find in one person: The ability to understand at the highest levels

technology and economics, the businesses of the 20th century and the 21st, policy and law, complex strategic interrelationships as well as the fundamental needs of ordinary Americans.

In leading the broadband team Blair has displayed all of those skills, and more. He has seen around corners, identified problems and solved them, and delivered on opportunities for consensus. He has been tough when toughness was needed, and flexible when flexibility was required.

He has been a friend, the guy you want in the foxhole, a brilliant and effective chief executive of the broadband operation, and a model public servant.

The public owes a ton of gratitude to Blair Levin, and to the members of the Omnibus Broadband Initiative from across the FCC staff.

“Always on” is a phrase used to describe broadband internet access. It’s a phrase that applies oh so well to the broadband team, on the 6th floor and throughout the building. Any hour of the day, any day of the week, for the past many months, the team has been working relentlessly on behalf of the American people.

I would like to ask everyone here who has worked on the Broadband Plan to stand up please. To each of you I say: We are humbled by your commitment, our nation is in your debt – our children will reap the benefits of your work.

We applaud you.